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SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICA LAUNCHES SCIENCE PARK, "THE INNOVATION HUB"

1. Gauteng Province Premier Mbhazima Shilowa on April 5 opened Africa's first internationally accredited Science Park in Pretoria. The new park is known as the "Innovation Hub" and is one of eleven projects in the province's "Blue IQ" initiative for developing economic infrastructure to attract investment to the province. The Hub is one of two Blue IQ projects focused on promoting technology-oriented, knowledge-intensive industrial development, or "smart industry," the other being "Gautrain," a project that will build rapid rail links between Pretoria and Johannesburg, and between the Sandton business district in northern Johannesburg and Johannesburg International Airport. The provincial government has spent 318 million Rands (approximately USD 52 million) to date on Blue IQ infrastructure development.

2. The Innovation Hub is a member of the International Association of Science Parks and the National Business Incubation Association. It offers state of the art, fully integrated information and communications technology support and places entry requirements on businesses seeking to become tenants, in keeping with its focus on high technology and innovation. The Hub welcomes both start-up and established companies. Local press coverage of the launch noted comments by the Hub's Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Neville Comins: "Part of the aim here is to establish a community. So far, the tenant uptake of eight companies has exceeded expectations, and we expect the multi-tenant enterprise building to be fully leased by June." One of the anchor tenants of the science park is SAPPI, a South-African based international forest and paper products company that has growing interaction with local universities and researchers.

3. Comment. Gauteng Province already accounts for about 40 percent of the country's gross domestic product, and the Blue IQ initiative further strengthens its dominant economic position.

FRAZER